

# **STEP AHEAD AWARENESS TOOLKIT**

## **Raising Awareness of Step Ahead Initiatives**

**Created for Step Ahead Councils**

By FSSA Community Planning  
October 15, 2004



## **Get into Action: Awareness Raising Activities**

- ☒ Learn about other successful Step Ahead programs
- ☒ Invite an elected official to your council meeting
- ☒ Create new partnerships with local community businesses
- ☒ Attend a networking event presented by your local Chamber of Commerce
- ☒ Attend a health fair to meet social service providers
- ☒ Sponsor a family resources booth at a family festival
- ☒ Sponsor a booth at a county fair
- ☒ Create a community event to raise awareness on healthy eating
- ☒ Promote a new or successful program through a local newspaper

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## Introduction

Dear Step Ahead Councils:

For 13 years Step Ahead has continuously worked to develop, organize, and streamline social services efforts in Indiana at the local level, and for 13 years Step Ahead has succeeded.

Building new partnerships, recruiting new members, raising new funds and affecting policy change is a difficult and ongoing process. Key to this process is developing relationships and raising awareness – of Step Ahead's value to the community and of pressing community issues around which people will mobilize.

This toolkit offers simple and inexpensive ideas to build relationships and raise awareness – along with actual tools in the Addendum.

We believe this toolkit will support the efforts you are already making to reach out to your communities. Our goal is to help you reach new levels of success in doing what you do: helping millions of Indiana families with children.

Please keep us informed about new projects, committees, community events, partnerships, and most of all successes. Thank you for your dedication and hard work.

Sincerely,

The FSSA Community Planning team

## Getting Started: Identifying Your Council's Successes

Sharing your success stories is an easy and effective way to demonstrate community collaboration and outreach. Community successes show elected officials, business leaders, social services professionals and community members the value of the Step Ahead process. Though the process is mostly coordination and planning, there are community achievements that stem directly from a council's efforts.

### ***History of Successes***

Since the inception of Step Ahead in 1991, councils have leveraged an estimated \$57,809,049<sup>1</sup> from grants and local community donations. Dedication and community concern is a direct result of an estimated 266,157<sup>2</sup> hours of volunteered time to council meetings and activities. We can only imagine how many families and children have been influenced over the past decade by Step Ahead.

### ***Recent Successes***

In recent years, Step Ahead councils have expanded their coordination efforts to include more community members and collaborate on statewide issues. Last year, Step Ahead councils worked hard to inform and educate their communities about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Indiana has been recognized as a national leader in EITC outreach and education. Step Ahead councils and partners have played a significant role in Indiana's outreach efforts. For example, Step Ahead councils posted more than 22,000 EITC flyers, 8,500 paycheck stuffers, 3,500 employer letters were sent out, and more than 100 local newspapers received EITC press releases and editorials.

Some EITC standout counties include:

- ✓ Tipton County distributed more than 5,500 flyers
- ✓ Fayette and Jefferson counties each distributed more than 3,000
- ✓ Henry County distributed 3,500 paycheck stuffers
- ✓ Floyd County sent EITC outreach information to more than 1,500 employers

Councils have also coordinated community services such as:

- ✓ Community needs assessments
- ✓ Community forums
- ✓ Free child car seats
- ✓ Family fairs
- ✓ Free CPR training for childcare providers
- ✓ Grant writing and management
- ✓ EITC and income tax preparation assistance

Over the next year, many Step Ahead councils plan to achieve goals in coordinating and strengthening community services that include:

- ✓ Childhood obesity awareness
- ✓ EITC awareness
- ✓ Mentoring programs for at-risk youth
- ✓ Parenting skills programs
- ✓ Employment/job readiness programs

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<sup>1</sup> Estimate based on FSSA Step Ahead surveys from 1998 - 2004

<sup>2</sup> Estimate based on FSSA Step Ahead surveys from 1998 - 2004

Examples of recent Step Ahead council success:

**Harrison County Step Ahead** is one of many councils that focused on EITC awareness and tax preparation assistance last year. In 2003, the council partnered with Indiana University Southeast to bring the VITA program to Harrison County for a “Tax Assistance Day.” In 2004, the event expanded to two full days, during which 32 tax returns were prepared.

**Newton County Step Ahead**, in partnership with the Newton County Extension, county schools, libraries and school organizations, received an award from the Purdue School of Consumer and Family Sciences for Newton County’s Family Fun Night Program. The program offers parenting classes to parents of kindergarten students. Step Ahead secured funding for the program through local grants.

**Delaware County Step Ahead** sponsored and underwrote some of the cost of the “Healing Through Art” community project. The project includes a traveling exhibit of art, poetry, and “words that hurt” created by victims of child abuse. When creating the exhibit, partners were asked, “How can the community see the impact of child abuse...? And, how can the victims heal?” Art provided an answer to both questions.

**Dubois County Step Ahead** was awarded first place from the Purdue Inspiring Families and Building Communities Award for its Family Festival. This award recognized the ninth year of the Dubois County Family Festival and came with a \$1,500 check. The Family Festival, sponsored by the Nurturing Families committee of Step Ahead, is made possible with the support of more than 75 local businesses and organizations that give monetary donations, services and time. Over 3,500 people attended this one-day opportunity to learn about local resources in a fun-filled environment.

**Ohio County Step Ahead** established the first licensed childcare center within the county in partnership with the city, county and state. Rising Sun Child Resource Center is also home to Head Start, WIC, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

*Be sure to visit the new FSSA Step Ahead web site to see examples of successes in all 92 counties!*

## **Raising Awareness in Your Local Community**

There are many low-cost, effective ways to raise community awareness. Raising awareness of Step Ahead throughout your county can lead to increased council membership, stronger partnerships, and increased community support. The most important elements of raising awareness and resources are discipline, organization, and believing in your council. Awareness can be achieved through partnerships, community events, and targeted efforts such as letter writing.

This section of your toolkit provides strategies for educating your community about Step Ahead. Whether you target local business groups or social service agencies, combining more than one of these strategies will make your outreach more successful. Using different methods increases the chance that people in your community will learn about and participate in Step Ahead.

Think about reaching out to other groups in your community who are likely to share Step Ahead priorities. Look at partnering with organizations that you haven't yet worked with, and contact people who can put you in touch with key leaders of these groups.

The first step is to determine what groups you would like to target. The next two sections provide tips and resources for doing just that.

## ***Tips for Reaching Out to Business Organizations***

Contacting and developing partnerships with local businesses might present more of a challenge than working with social service agencies because these two groups are often perceived to have conflicting agendas. This, however, does not mean you shouldn't try. In reality, both groups want a good quality of life for their community. Businesses rely on social services to train much-needed entry-level workers. Businesses also rely on social services to provide resources such as affordable childcare, housing, and healthcare to lower-wage workers. Without these services absenteeism and turnover rates increase. Local businesses and business organizations are a wonderful source of community information and funding. Contacting local businesses will increase the awareness of Step Ahead and can lead to new council members or additional funds. A business owner, president, CEO, director, or company public relations person will be your best point of contact.

### Community Foundation

A community foundation is much like a private foundation. The biggest difference is the funding source. A private foundation has one source of funding whereas a community foundation has multiple sources of funding. There may be foundation contributors in your community who would like to hear about Step Ahead.

The nearest Community Foundation can be found at:

[www.fdncenter.org/funders/grantmaker/gws\\_comm/comm\\_in.html](http://www.fdncenter.org/funders/grantmaker/gws_comm/comm_in.html)

### Chamber of Commerce

Attending a local Chamber of Commerce event will allow you to disseminate your Step Ahead information to a large number of local businesses in a short amount of time. Some tools you may want to take to a chamber event include:

- ✓ Key talking points (see Addendum)
- ✓ Business cards and brochures (see Addendum for a customizable council brochure)

Local Chambers of Commerce can be found at: [www.indianachamber.com/local\\_chamber.asp](http://www.indianachamber.com/local_chamber.asp)

### Business Associations

An additional venue for sharing Step Ahead information is business association meetings. Attending association meetings will provide an opportunity to reach a selected type of business. A brief 10 minute presentation on your Step Ahead council will help achieve public awareness. Tools you may need include:

- ✓ Key talking points (see Addendum)
- ✓ Business cards and brochures (see Addendum)
- ✓

You can locate business associations through the Indiana Department of Commerce:

[www.in.gov/doc/welcome/Staff\\_Regional.htm](http://www.in.gov/doc/welcome/Staff_Regional.htm)



## ***Tips for Reaching out to Social Service Agencies***

It is important to recruit a broad range of social service agencies to your council to accurately reflect and represent your diverse community. These organizations have the most in common with Step Ahead and will be willing to collaborate on more community projects. Informing them about Step Ahead can be accomplished inexpensively through direct contact at one-on-one meetings and public events, through letter-writing and by distributing promotional pieces like brochures and posters.

### Social Service Agencies

Review the social services directory for your county. Be sure it includes non-profits, faith-based organizations and government agencies offering the following types of services: health, mental health, education, childcare, workforce development, housing, law enforcement, fire and safety, correction, public transportation, youth services, and community development. Mark off the agencies that are already members of your council. Send an informational packet to the remaining agencies with a letter of invitation to attend your next council meeting (see Addendum for letter).

Looking for local organizations that aren't listed in your local social services directory? These web links may help:

Local K-12 Schools

[www.doe.state.in.us/htmls/k12.html](http://www.doe.state.in.us/htmls/k12.html)

Local ministries

<http://netministries.org/cgi-bin/nmform02.exe?sortcity=No&country=USA&state=in>

County offices, Purdue Cooperative Extension Service

[www.ces.purdue.edu/counties.htm](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/counties.htm)

County/city hospitals

[www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/acc/hospital/index.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/acc/hospital/index.htm)

Local health department

[www.state.in.us/isdh/links/local\\_dep/index.htm](http://www.state.in.us/isdh/links/local_dep/index.htm)

Agencies providing services to people with disabilities

[www.disabilityresources.org/INDIANA.html](http://www.disabilityresources.org/INDIANA.html)

Agencies and shelters providing domestic violence support services

[www.sboard.org/SHELTERS/IN.HTM](http://www.sboard.org/SHELTERS/IN.HTM)

Local Women, Infants and Children office

[www.in.gov/isdh/programs/wic/index.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/programs/wic/index.htm)

### Municipal Services

You may also wish to develop a relationship with some of the municipal services providers in your county, including:

Local Police

[www.the911site.com/911pd/indiana.shtml](http://www.the911site.com/911pd/indiana.shtml)

Local Fire

[www.the911site.com/911lk/indiana.shtml](http://www.the911site.com/911lk/indiana.shtml)

## ***Using Letters and Meetings to Reach Your Target Groups***

Whether you are recruiting local businesses or social service agencies, personalized letters and one-on-one meetings can be an effective and cost efficient way of increasing council membership, local partnerships, and resources. Following are tips to assist you:

### Letter-Writing (via U.S. Mail or Email)

Sometimes building partnerships and increasing membership is as simple as writing a letter or sending an email. Letters and emails produce the best results when a specific action is requested, such as participation in a meeting, sharing of information, donation of resources, etc. People like to be asked to participate, especially when it is for a good cause. It makes them feel needed and appreciated (see Addendum). Some hints include:

- ✓ Reference a common connection.
- ✓ If mailing a hard copy, use Step Ahead letterhead and consider hand-writing the envelope if you have neat penmanship as this will stand out from “junk” mail.
- ✓ Be specific in your request. If you want a partnership...ask! If you want money...ask for an amount!
- ✓ Enclose a brief (one page) council profile.

### Networking with one-on-one meetings

#### Requesting the Meeting

- ✓ Let the person know what the purpose of the meeting is (one or two topics)
- ✓ Let them know how much time you would like
- ✓ Offer to meet at a location that is convenient to them

#### Preparing for the Meeting

- ✓ Prepare talking points (see Addendum)
- ✓ Prepare a packet of information to leave

#### During the Meeting

- ✓ Be on time
- ✓ Thank the individual for meeting you
- ✓ Stick to your talking points, but be flexible with your conversation
- ✓ Be persuasive, but not pushy
- ✓ Ask questions about community involvement
- ✓ Keep track of time

#### After the Meeting

- ✓ Send a thank you letter within two days on behalf of your Step Ahead council.

## ***Using Events to Reach Your Target Groups***

Participating in a community event is a wonderful way of educating the public on Step Ahead. Although most events are attended by a broad audience comprised mostly of families and children, you will also reach some business leaders and social services professionals at these types of events.

### Local Health Fairs

Attending a health fair is a great way to meet social service agencies in your community and statewide. If you have the funding, setting up a display will provide the most exposure for your council. If you cannot afford a display table or do not have the time, look around the fair for select agencies that you feel would make a good addition to your Step Ahead council. Approach a representative and present your Step Ahead information. Be sure to carry business cards and Step Ahead brochures.

Local health care providers can be found at: [www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/providers/directories.htm](http://www.in.gov/isdh/regsvcs/providers/directories.htm)

### County Fairs

A county fair is a terrific place to educate people on Step Ahead and general program topics. This is an opportunity to partner with other healthcare providers, educators, or social service agencies to create public awareness of Step Ahead. Select a common theme and a promotion to draw a crowd. For example, if you and your partners want to educate the public on healthy eating, bring in a chef to cook healthy meals or snacks. This will be fun and educational.

Make sure you have information on Step Ahead located where people can find it. This information should include:

- ✓ Poster (see Addendum)
- ✓ Brochure (see Addendum)
- ✓ Council flyer (see Addendum)

Contact your county fair commission for more details. A county directory is available at: [www.in.gov/mylocal](http://www.in.gov/mylocal)

### Creating Your Own Events

When creating an event, focus on one or two issues like foster care, child abuse, child safety, child care, etc. Pick an event theme that is easy and fun. This will ensure participation and spectator turnout. Some examples include:

- ✓ Silent auctions
- ✓ Car washes
- ✓ Yard sales
- ✓ Potlucks
- ✓ Open tent Gatherings

Use flyers, local businesses, and community groups to inform the public of where and when the event will take place. Try to find a “high traffic” location with ample parking for the event. Send a press release to your local paper to generate free media coverage. You may also want to display a donation bucket. Provide a sign indicating that all proceeds will go toward the issue being promoted. Consider inviting local police and fire departments to create kid-friendly educational activities to add an extra element to your event and draw a larger crowd.

## ***Working with Local Media to Raise Awareness***

One of the most effective ways of reaching your targeted audiences, influencing participation, and changing public opinion is to make use of the media in a planned way. By working with the media, you can raise council awareness. Media coverage can aid in increasing attendance, fundraising, and public perception within your community. Commonly used tools for getting free coverage are press releases, letters to the editor, and media event alerts.

### **Press Releases**

A press release is simple, often effective way of getting free publicity in local newspapers. Looking at a press release from the editor's point of view tells you exactly what a good press release should be. It should be in the proper form, short, readable, and legitimate. Here are a few helpful hints in writing your press release (see Addendum for sample):

- ✓ A press release includes the name of the organization, a contact number, the date, and a release date.
- ✓ A press release is short, preferably no more than one page.
- ✓ A good press release is readable in both form and content. Use double spacing and leave wide margins. Also, follow "who, what, why, where, and when" format when writing your press release.
- ✓ A good press release is legitimate. Share a successful event, a new program, a major grant or award received, or a partnership.
- ✓ Send press releases that are timely. These should be sent two-three weeks in advance for daily and weekly publications; they should be sent six-eight weeks in advance for monthly publications.
- ✓ Tailor press releases to the publications to illustrate a connection.
- ✓ Non-press organizations and people should also get your council press releases two – four weeks in advance. This will build your public reputation and an awareness of issues.
- ✓ Do not be afraid to make a follow-up call to confirm receipt of your release and to inquire about the likelihood of the writer or editor using the information.

### **Letters to the Editor**

Letters to the editors section of your local paper is an ideal forum for sharing your opinion and educating the local community. In addition, it is one of the first pages many elected officials and local leaders turn to. There are a few guidelines to follow for getting your letter printed. These guidelines include:

- ✓ Short, concise letters of no more than 250 words
- ✓ Discuss a single issue
- ✓ Do not be abusive
- ✓ Be logical
- ✓ Use facts
- ✓ Do not use letterhead
- ✓ Have an original signature
- ✓ Use a hand written envelope

### **Media Event Alerts**

A media alert is a brief notice announcing an upcoming event. It tells what, when, where, who, and why, and provides the name and telephone number of a contact person at your organization. Media alerts are usually faxed to assignment editors at TV and radio stations three

to four days prior to an event. Your media list should include information on how each contact prefers to receive information, if not by fax.

Media alerts should be used when you need to publicize an event, and particularly when there are opportunities for specialized media coverage at those events (e.g., photo opportunities, interviews, etc.). See Addendum for a sample media alert.

## ***Using Sponsorships to Raise Awareness***

### **Public Awareness Radio Campaigns**

Public awareness campaigns can raise awareness about an important issue affecting families with children while at the same time raising awareness of your Step Ahead Council and reinforcing its commitment to the community. Public radio stations sell “sponsorships” of their programs to defray the costs associated with the broadcast of the program. In turn, the station gives that business acknowledgement around the broadcast of the program.

For instance, your local radio station may host a weekly talk show on parenting. If your Step Ahead council has prioritized parenting on its action plan, you may wish to pay to sponsor this program. Each time the show aired, the announcer would read an acknowledgement, such as “Today’s Parenting Chat is sponsored by Step Ahead of ABC County. Step Ahead engages our community to strengthen families with children. Call 123-4567 to find out how to get involved.”

For more information on your local public radio station, go to:

[www.npr.org/stations/stations\\_results.php?sForm=city](http://www.npr.org/stations/stations_results.php?sForm=city)

## **Raising Awareness by Building Relationships with Elected Officials**

The purpose of building relationships with elected officials is twofold: (1) To familiarize them with the Step Ahead process and the value your council brings to the community; and (2) To call attention to important community issues affecting families and children.

Inviting elected officials to your council meetings can be an effective way to get them involved in making changes for the public good. Most elected officials want to meet with organizations and citizens from their communities to hear their success, concerns, and recommendations. Remember that you have several elected officials at the local, county, state, and federal levels with different decision-making authority. Meeting with each elected official will increase awareness in your community.

### ***Target List***

- ☒ U.S. Senator
- ☒ U.S. Representative
- ☒ State House Representative
- ☒ State Senator
- ☒ Mayor
- ☒ City/County Councilman
- ☒ County Sheriff
- ☒ School Board

### ***Web Resource Links***

Federal (U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative)

[www.firstgov.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml](http://www.firstgov.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml)

State (State Representative, State Senator)

[www.in.gov/apps/sos/legislator/search](http://www.in.gov/apps/sos/legislator/search)

Local (Mayor, City/County Councilman)

[www.in.gov/mylocal](http://www.in.gov/mylocal)

Sheriff

[www.indianasheriffs.org/isa/frame.asp](http://www.indianasheriffs.org/isa/frame.asp)

School Board Members

<http://mustang.doe.state.in.us/SEARCH/search.cfm>

### ***Guidelines***

Here are a few tips to help you meet your elected officials:

#### **Arranging the Meeting**

- ✓ Call your elected official's office. Call at least one month in advance and ask to speak with the appointments secretary or legislative assistant. Identify yourself as the coordinator of your county Step Ahead council and constituent of the official, stating where you live. Briefly explain that you would like to invite the elected official to a council meeting.
- ✓ Send a letter or fax to confirm his/her attendance. Include the time, date, and location of the meeting, as well as your name, address, and daytime phone number. Also include a brief (one page) county profile of successes, goals, and programs along with a copy of

the meeting agenda (see Preparing for the Meeting). This will prepare your elected official for the meeting.

### Preparing for the Meeting

- ✓ Set date, time, and place (reserve space if necessary). Strongly encourage all your council members to attend. Call each member personally to follow up. Explain to members that it is important that your council has a strong and diverse attendance. This will show good community organizing and council credibility. Track RSVPs. Cancel or postpone the meeting if attendance is projected to be weak.
- ✓ Prepare a brief introduction to welcome your elected official at the start of the meeting. Include his/her official title, how many years he/she has been in office, and a comment about a current initiative he/she is spearheading. Thank him/her for attending. Remember that many elected officials will not want to have special attention drawn to them so make your introduction brief before moving forward with the agenda.
- ✓ Prepare a strong agenda. Your agenda should also be in logical sequence of items and time allocated based on importance (see Addendum for sample). Decide and articulate the purpose of the meeting.
- ✓ Prepare opening remarks for the meeting. Remember that many elected officials don't know what the Step Ahead process or your council is about. Your job is to help educate them on Step Ahead and your council. Your opening remarks may include:
  - An explanation of Step Ahead and your council
  - What kind of projects you have accomplished
  - Goals for this year, including fundraising goals
- ✓ Give an overview on the most pressing issues and unmet needs of families and children in your county. Offer solutions. Include facts and statistics to support your statements. (This is not intended to be a complaint session; rather, it is an opportunity to draw attention to critical issues).
- ✓ Make sure each committee gives a brief update that highlights only a few salient points.
- ✓ Be prepared for your elected official to ask questions about programs and outcomes.
- ✓ Prepare a packet of information for your elected official to take for review.
- ✓ Confirm meeting chair and recorder will be in attendance.

### During the Meeting

- ✓ Begin and end on time. Your legislator has a full schedule. Be prepared for him/her to leave early. Most have a full calendar.
- ✓ Introduce yourself and everyone else.
- ✓ Follow agenda to focus discussion (Encourage participation, but stick to the agenda).
- ✓ Control problems. Present solution ideas to community problems.
- ✓ Assign tasks.
- ✓ Sum up periodically.
- ✓ Set up next meeting.
- ✓ **Do not** ask your elected official for additional funds or policy changes.
- ✓ **Do not** discuss politics. Step Ahead councils are non-political.
- ✓ **Do not** endorse or contribute resources to an elected official.

### After the Meeting

- ✓ Type minutes immediately.
- ✓ Send a thank you letter to your elected official on behalf of your Step Ahead council. Include minutes, additional materials, and other information if requested. You may also want to include date, time, and location of your next Step Ahead meeting and invite your elected official to attend again.



## Design Tips for Communications Pieces

Follow these basic rules when creating posters, brochures, flyers and announcements for your community:

1. Content: Simple and brief is usually better. Remember that people are not likely to spend more than a few seconds casually skimming over your material. Get to the point and communicate the facts quickly. They can always contact you for more information if they are interested
2. Layout: Always consider your audience. For instance, use large type for communications pieces that are directed at seniors.
3. Style: Again, simple is usually better. Avoid mixing more than two different typestyles on a communications piece; if you do the piece will look cluttered and may overwhelm the reader.
4. Logo: For black and white pieces, always use the version of the Step Ahead logo that was specifically designed for black and white use (see below). The color logo version, when printed in black and white, will produce shades of gray instead of a crisp black and white image. For color pieces, always use the standard Step Ahead colors (see below) – unless you are printing in one color, in which case you may print the logo (using the black and white logo version) in that one solid color. When you cut and paste the logo into documents, you may need to resize it. When you do so, always hold down the CTRL key before you “stretch” the logo or make it smaller; holding down the CTRL key locks the proportion in place, so you won’t end up with a “scrunched” looking logo (see below).

Blue and Yellow



Black and White



Example of a logo that was “stretched” without holding the CTRL key down



## How FSSA Raises Awareness of Step Ahead

The Community Planning team works hard to share the vision of Step Ahead with state agencies and nonprofit organizations. We accomplish this through public speaking, networking, and by creating promotional tools. Our goal is to inform as many people as possible about Step Ahead to make community collaboration and increased council membership easier for you.

### Examples of Public Speaking at Conferences and Seminars

- ✓ Christine Freiman, Community Planning Director, spoke at a training seminar for FSSA IMPACT workers in late August.
- ✓ Elizabeth Darby, Community Planning Consultant, gave an overview of Step Ahead at the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF) conference in September.

### Examples of Networking at Meetings and Committees

- ✓ **State Agencies:** Each member of the Community Planning team is assigned to act as a liaison with a state agency. It is our job to share information about Step Ahead with key contacts in the agency. Assignment of state government agencies include:  
Cindy Collier: Indiana Family and Social Services Administration  
Christine Freiman: Department of Education, Department of Health  
Elizabeth Darby: Department of Workforce Development, Department of Commerce  
Joe Shelton: Department of Corrections, Criminal Justice Institute
- ✓ **Nonprofit Organizations:** The Community Planning team regularly communicates with statewide, regional and local nonprofit organizations about Step Ahead by sharing Step Ahead accomplishments and priorities to discover common interests.
- ✓ **Coalition for Human Services Committee:** Cindy Collier, Director of Policy, Planning and Communication, sits on the board for Coalition for Human Services Planning and has educated all members about Step Ahead.
- ✓ **HIIF Committee:** Joe Shelton, Community Planning Consultant, sits on the Technical Assistance Group (TAG) for the Health Insurance for Indiana Families (HIIF) Committee and has involved Step Ahead through health accessibility surveys.
- ✓ **Childhood Obesity Coalition:** Christine Freiman, Director of Community Planning, sits on this coalition. Members include a wide range of state agencies, corporations, and non-profit organizations.

### Promotional Tools

- ✓ **FSSA Step Ahead Web Site:** Over the past couple of years, the Step Ahead web site has been stagnant in appearance and accessibility. Soon that will change. The Step Ahead web site is in the process of receiving a new face and much easier information navigation.
- ✓ **Step Ahead Council Member Certificate:** (See Addendum for actual certificate.) This certificate was created for Step Ahead councils to customize and present to each

member as a show of appreciation. The hope is that members will proudly display the certificates in high-traffic office areas, thus raising awareness of Step Ahead.

- ✓ ***Statewide Step Ahead Promotional Poster:*** Multiple copies of these attractive posters will be handed out at the Statewide Step Ahead Coordinators meeting on December 3, 2004. Please present all members of your council with a poster and encourage them to display it in a highly visible area. Look for additional high-traffic areas within your community to display the poster, such as libraries and schools.

#### Other Examples of Promotion

- ✓ All FSSA division directors have a master sheet of county priorities so they can look for areas of collaboration. This information has also been shared with other state agencies.
- ✓ Cheryl Sullivan, FSSA Cabinet Secretary, has featured Step Ahead in her weekly message that goes out to all FSSA staff.
- ✓ A statewide press release was recently distributed mentioning the shared childhood obesity project.

## Addendum

The Addendum **currently includes**:

1. Talking points for presentations and meetings
2. Informational letter
3. Fundraising letter
4. Detailed instructions for writing a news release
5. News release template / sample: promoting a family fair
6. News release template / sample: reporting results of family fair
7. News release template / sample: announcing literacy course sponsorship
8. 10 Tips for Talking to Reporters
9. Sample letter inviting elected official to council meeting
10. Sample confirmation letter to send when elected official agrees to attend council meeting
11. Sample letter to thank elected official for attending meeting
12. Customizable council membership certificate
13. Sample council agenda

Items **under development** that will be **available** in November include:

Item	Format	File Name / Location
Statewide promotional Step Ahead Poster	Printed in color, 24" x 36"	Limited copies available to all councils
Promotional council brochure	Electronic (MS Word)	Will be posted to FSSA Step Ahead web site for downloading

## Talking Points

### Provide a brief description and summary of the Step Ahead mission statement

**Example:** Step Ahead is an initiative of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

### Provide a brief history of your council

**Example:** The Rose Co. Step Ahead has been active in the community since 1991. We have coordinated and collaborated on community projects, helped raise money for community services, and provided emergency assistance for those who need it.

### Provide a general description of recent and current project areas (childcare, transportation, etc.)

**Example:** Last year the Rose Co. Step Ahead helped coordinate a family fair. The fair provided information on childcare, child safety, emergency assistance, and healthcare issues. This year we will be hosting the fair in late June and adding healthy lifestyle information.

### Highlight one or two successful projects or accomplishments

**Example:** Two successful projects from 2004 were

- ✓ The family fair was attended by roughly 1,500 people
- ✓ We developed, published, and distributed more than 3,000 community resource booklets

### Highlight one or two goals for 2005

**Example:** Next year we plan to

- ✓ Increase distribution of our community resource booklet by an additional 1,000 copies
- ✓ Increase community awareness of childhood obesity

### Explain how the organization can help

**Example:** You can help by providing a small donation for our community resource booklet and family fair.



STEP AHEAD

(Date)

(Name/Title)

(Address)

Dear (name)

I am writing to inform you about the (county) County Step Ahead program.

Step Ahead is an initiative of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

Last year the (county) County Step Ahead helped coordinate a family fair with roughly 1,500 people in attendance. The fair provided information on childcare, child safety, emergency assistance, and healthcare issues. This year we will be hosting the fair in late June and adding healthy lifestyle information. We anticipate more than 2,000 people will attend.

With your support and the support of other community members, the (county) County Step Ahead council will assist more community residents. Help us help our community. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

(coordinator name)

(County name) County Step Ahead Council Coordinator



(Date)

(Name/Title)  
(Address)

Dear (name)

I am writing to request (name of organization)'s support of the (county) County Step Ahead council.

Step Ahead is an initiative of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

Last year the (county) County Step Ahead helped coordinate a family fair with roughly 1,500 people in attendance. The fair provided information on childcare, child safety, emergency assistance, and healthcare issues. This year we will be hosting the fair in late June and adding healthy lifestyle information. We anticipate more than 2,000 people will attend.

Our Step Ahead council is faced with limited funds and resources. A small donation of \$(amount) or a resource of (list an item like 50 reams of paper) would go a long way in helping us continue our program and achieve our goals.

With your support and the support of other community members, the (county) County Step Ahead council will assist more community residents. Help us help our community. Thank you for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

(coordinator name)  
(County name) County Step Ahead Council Coordinator

## DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

A news release detailing your council's latest accomplishment or upcoming event is a great way to let media and others know about your council's activities. It is important to have a clear objective for developing a news release. Think through the following questions: What is my news? What result do I expect from this news release (inform, educate, persuade, activate, etc.)? Who would be interested? Why would they care?

### BASIC FORMAT OF A NEWS RELEASE

- Print the release on your organization's letterhead.
- Place the phrase "For Immediate Release" and the date on the upper left margin.
- Below this phrase or on the right margin, place your contact person's name and phone number.
- Compose a short headline that clearly describes the news release content and grabs the reader's attention. Center it in bold type on the page. Place concise secondary subheads in italics below the main headline.
- Begin the first paragraph with your dateline. The dateline identifies where the news originated. For example, "SPOKANE, WA. — Moving for Life launched a new program to help seniors get active right in their own neighborhood."
- Put the date, time and other time-critical information related to your activities in the first paragraph. Concisely summarize the facts — who, what, when, where and why — in the first paragraph. In the second paragraph, insert a quote from a leader within your organization, such as the executive director or a board member, about the event or program. Be sure to identify the source of all quotes. Make sure that the quote content explains and enhances the story, and that there is a clear relationship between the person quoted and the story. Try to limit the number of quotes to no more than two people.
- Details on the event and the program go in the third paragraph.
- The final paragraph covers basic organizational information, e.g., who you are, history of the event or program. If you have a list of member organizations, sponsors, or other partners, list them in an attachment rather than incorporating that information into the text of the release. This makes it easier for a reporter or editor to review.
- If your release goes beyond one page, type "-more-" at the bottom of the first page. Keep the release to a maximum of two pages, but strive for one.
- At the end of your release, type "###" or "-30-" to indicate the end of the copy.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Use short, declarative sentences and double-space the lines. Make sure to use an active verb and, if possible, the word "today" in your first sentence.
- Avoid the use of jargon and explain any acronyms at their first use, e.g. "The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)..." Avoid "puff" words and phrases such as "exciting," "very large," "monumental," etc. Be as clear and concrete as possible in your descriptions.
- Link the facts of the project or event to an important issue or need in your local community. Using real-life examples helps make the human connection. Highlight benefits of your work to the community.
- Review the release for clarity and flow, and be sure that all words and names are spelled correctly.



(Customize this release by inserting your own information in red text areas)



**For immediate release:** (11 point or 12 point type)  
**Month, day, year**

**Media Contact:** **(Name)**  
**(Phone Number with Area Code)**  
**(E-mail address)**  
**(Web site and Fax - if applicable)**

## **Community mobilizing to educate public at Family Fair**

Local Step Ahead Council to host July 20<sup>th</sup> event (18 and 14 point type)

**Rose City** (11 or 12 point type) – Residents interested in learning more about personal safety, nutrition and local human services should attend the first **Rose County Step Ahead Council's Family Fair on Saturday, July 20 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Westside Shopping Mall, (address).**

The fair is the Council's way of increasing community awareness of critical public services in a festive family environment. Visitors can participate in free health screenings, receive valuable health information and tips and view emergency service equipment used by local police and fire departments.

**"We want families to leave the fair better educated about how to use community resources to enhance their health, safety and well-being," said Jane Faith, Council chairwoman.**

About **500 people** are expected to attend the inaugural event.

Step Ahead is an initiative of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

For more information about attending, participating or volunteering or to learn more about the **Rose County Step Ahead Council, contact Jane Faith at 317-555-5555.**

(Customize this release by inserting your own information in red text areas)



**For immediate release:** (11 point or 12 point type)  
**Month, day, year**

**Media Contact:** **(Name)**  
**(Phone Number with Area Code)**  
**(E-mail address)**  
**(Web site and Fax - if applicable)**

## **Council's first family fair priceless – Detects health concerns**

Screenings detect health concerns in 97 participants (18 and 14 point type)

**Rose City** (11 or 12 point type) – **More than 600 residents attended the first Rose County Step Ahead Council Family Fair last Saturday at Westside Mall.** Attendees learned about personal health, safety, nutrition and local services while enjoying entertainment and healthy fair food.

**Of the 600 attendees, screenings detected potential health concerns in 97 participants.** Screening results were shared with each participant. Those with potential health concerns were instructed to schedule an appointment with their medical professional for further evaluation.

**"We never envisioned the tremendous impact this event would have on individuals and families - potentially preventing the development of a serious health condition through early detection,"** said Jane Faith, Rose County Step Ahead Council Chairperson. **"Needless to say, planning is already underway for next year."**

Step Ahead is an initiative of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

For information about events, programs or volunteering or to learn more about the Rose County Step Ahead Council, contact Jane Faith at 317-555-5555.

(Customize this release by inserting your own information in red text areas)



**For immediate release:** (11 point or 12 point type)  
**Month, day, year**

**Media Contact: (Name)**  
**(Phone Number with Area Code)**  
**(E-mail address)**  
**(Web site and Fax - if applicable)**

## **Local Step Ahead Council sponsors literacy course**

Reading course offered to both Spanish and English speaking residents  
(18 and 14 point type)

**Rose City** (11 or 12 point type) – Individuals interested in learning how to read should register for the **Rose County Community Center's bi-lingual literacy course**, sponsored by **Rose County Step Ahead**. The Thursday evening course starts **September 9** and runs through **December 15** from 7 to 8 pm, at the **Rose County Community Center (address)**.

The course sponsorship is the Council's way of enhancing the lives of **non-reading English and Spanish speaking adults**. Recent data shows literacy rates among adults in **Rose County** dropped 10% last year.

"We held a public forum earlier this year to hear first-hand from families what their most pressing needs are. Literacy was high on the list," said **Jane Faith**, **Rose County Step Ahead Coordinator**.

The Council has been working with service agencies and employers of migrant workers to get the word out. **Mrs. Faith estimates that more than 100 people will attend the course**.

Step Ahead is an initiative of the **Indiana Family and Social Services Administration**. Since 1991, local Step Ahead Councils, composed of community leaders and volunteers, have served as locally-driven vehicles for mobilizing people around social service issues facing families with children 0-18. The goal is to better coordinate existing services and create partnerships to fill unmet needs.

For more information about registering and participating or to learn more about the **Rose County Step Ahead Council**, contact **Jane Faith** at **317-555-5555**.



STEP AHEAD

(Date)

(Name/Title)  
(Address)

Re: Step Ahead council meeting

Dear (Representative, Senator, Mayor, Councilman, Chief)

The purpose of this letter is to formally invite you, on behalf of the (county) County Step Ahead council, to be a guest at our upcoming council meeting.

Our meeting will be held (day, month, year) from (start time to end time) at (location). Enclosed is the meeting agenda for your reference.

In closing, we would be pleased and honored if you would be our guest at the (month, year) council meeting.

I will call you in the next week to confirm.

Sincerely,

(coordinator name)  
(County name) County Step Ahead Council Coordinator



(Date)

(Title/Name)  
(Address)  
(City, IN Zip)

Re: Step Ahead council meeting

Dear (Representative, Senator, Mayor, Councilman, Chief)

On behalf of the (County name) County Step Ahead council, I would like to thank you for agreeing to attend our (month, date, year) meeting. We look forward to meeting and sharing our goals with you.

Enclosed is a meeting agenda and driving directions. A few words from you at the start of the meeting would be greatly appreciated.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

(coordinator name)  
(County name) County Step Ahead Council Coordinator



STEP AHEAD

(Date)

(Title/Name)

(Address)

(City, IN Zip)

Re: Step Ahead meeting

Dear (Representative, Senator, Mayor, Councilman, Chief)

I want to thank you for attending the (county) County Step ahead meeting on (day, month, and date), 2004. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your supportive comments.

Your attendance has strengthened our enthusiasm to build more community support and awareness.

Thanks again for attending and please feel free to come again. Our next meeting will be (day, month, date), 2004 from (time) at (location).

Sincerely,

(coordinator name)

No person was ever honored for what he received.  
Honor has been the reward for what he gave.

*Calvin Coolidge*

## *Step Ahead of \_\_\_\_\_ County*

Is pleased to present this certificate to

**ABC Organization**

As a valuable member of the Step Ahead Council of \_\_\_\_\_ County

In recognition of significant contributions toward

**Strengthening Families with Children**

Presented this 15<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2004

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*Step Ahead Coordinator*

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*Step Ahead Chair*



*"People helping people"*





STEP AHEAD

Rose County Step Ahead  
March 5, 2004  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon  
Rose County Hospital Boardroom

AGENDA

- I. Welcome (10:00 – 10:05)
- II. Absences and Voting by Proxy (10:05 – 10:10)
- III. Minutes (review and approve) (10:10 – 10:15)
- IV. Financial Reporting (10:15 – 10:30)
  - a. New money
  - b. Expenses
- V. Committee Reports (10:30 – 11:20)
  - a. Childcare
  - b. Transportation
  - c. Obesity
  - d. Community Outreach
- VI. New Business (11:20 – 11:45)

(Discuss new actions, community issues, funding avenues, sharing of information, etc.)
- VII. Review (11:45 – 11:55)

(Sum up meeting and tasks assigned)
- VIII. Next Meeting (11:55 – 12 noon)